

BASIC
STANDARD ARABIC
GRAMMAR
IN 30 LESSONS

Ali J. Hussain

SJL Press
Chicago

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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DEDICATION

For Katherine H. Lang and Stuart D. Sears, who helped me start my adventures in Arabic.

And for the faculty of the Department of Arabic Language at the University of Damascus who helped me advance to higher levels.

And for the many other teachers, colleagues, and friends, too many to name, who helped strengthen my language skills and my love for this exquisitely beautiful language.

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INTRODUCTION

As a student, one is exposed to various teachers and teaching styles. When students become teachers, they become more familiar with pedagogical trends and textbooks. Having studied and taught at a number of academic institutions in the United States and Canada, both small, private colleges and large state institutions, I can reasonably claim with a high degree of confidence that I have learned more from my students than they have from me. One of the most fascinating tasks of a teacher is determining how a student's mind works, and formulating the presentation of new, complex, or foreign concepts in such a way that the student is readily able to grasp them. Few things are more exhilarating for a teacher than seeing the look on a student's face when, after repeated failed attempts, one of the teacher's explanations finally resonates with the student's mental machinery and the lightbulb begins to shine brightly!

This booklet contains a concentrated summary of the lessons I use for a specialized, highly individualized intensive Arabic course that I developed for select students, usually very serious new students of Arabic or former students of Arabic who have been separated from Arabic for some time and need to refresh their knowledge. It is nearly impossible to use this as a self-study guide. A student is best served if these lessons are taught by a competent and experienced instructor. The methodology is one that evolved out of my experiences studying Arabic initially in American universities, then being forced to unlearn years of 'Western' Arabic training, and subsequently relearning Arabic in the classical method traditionally taught in the Middle East for over a thousand years. Having traveled both paths has provided me a sense of how to make what is usually taught through traditional methods more accessible to a student whose linguistic thought processes have been shaped by American and European teaching methods. In the lessons that follow, Arabic grammar has been divided into three main sections and presented with deliberately focused vocalization in such a way as to introduce students to progressively more complex aspects of the language until, by lesson 30, they have a good grasp of basic standard Arabic grammar.

This book is designed for a highly individualized course that condenses the most important aspects of basic standard Arabic grammar into a concentrated 30 lessons. Firstly, it is basic. There are many details that a comprehensive Arabic grammar would include but which are not included here. This book focuses on only the most basic aspects of Arabic that are prerequisite to more advanced study. Secondly, this book deals with standard Arabic. Standard Arabic is used for scholarly, literary, and official purposes, unlike the dialects of Arabic that are commonly used for conversation in everyday life. Thirdly, it focuses on grammar. An initial very basic vocabulary set is provided merely as a vehicle to begin the lessons and progress from one lesson to the next. Thereafter, the book focuses on grammatical constructs, syntax, and morphology. Finally, this book is designed for an intensive course of only 30 lessons. After mastering these 30 lessons, students should have a solid grasp of basic Arabic grammar, covering about 80-90% of the Arabic they will come across in any standard Arabic text. Serious students usually continue with advanced studies and learn the remainder in context. But before they can do so, students must first master basic standard Arabic grammar, have a good grasp of the triliteral root system, and understand how to use an Arabic dictionary. The following method aims to help them do exactly that.

My thanks to Ali Taqi and to Haleema Qazi for testing the beta version before print.

Praise for anything commendable in this diminutive volume belongs to my teachers and to theirs before them. Any flaws herein are no one's but my own.

Ali J. Hussain, Chicago, 1425/2004

P R E L I M I N A R I E S

THE ARABIC ALPHABET

First one must familiarize oneself with the Arabic alphabet. Learn the individual letters and their corresponding sounds.

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز

س ش ص ض ط ظ

ع غ ف ق ك ل م ن

ه و ي

Arabic uses a semi-cursive script. This means that letters sometimes connect to each other and sometimes do not. Learn the beginning, middle, and ending forms of each letter, and learn which letters have no middle form (they only connect to the previous letter, never to the next).

ا بيب تتث جج حح خخ دذر ز

سس شش صص ضض طط ظظ

عع غغ فف قق كك لל مم نن

هه و ييي

CONSONANTS AND VOWELS

Learn which letters are consonants and which letters can function as both consonants and vowels.

ء/ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز

س ش ص ض ط ظ

ع غ ف ق ك ل م ن

ه و ي

Learn the difference between short vowels and long vowels in Arabic.

أ
ؤ
ي

Learn the combination of short vowels and consonants that form diphthongs. A diphthong is when two vowel sounds are blended together in the same syllable. Some examples in English are ah+oo as in 'cow' and ah-ee as in 'rain.' Some (not all) of the following are Arabic diphthongs.

يَا	وَأْ	أ + آ = آ
يُؤْ	وُؤْ	أُؤْ
يِيْ	وِيْ	إِيْ

INITIAL VOCABULARY

The following is a preliminary list designed to allow the lessons to begin. With each lesson's homework, students are encouraged to submit words (in English) that they would like to use and, after vetting to ensure that none will cause complications that the student is not yet equipped to handle (broken plurals, diptotes, etc.), the relevant vocabulary (in Arabic) is provided at the next lesson. Then students can use their own vocabulary words to formulate homework sentences and practice compositions. The vocabulary for the course is thereby highly individualized and customizable, and therefore separate from this text.

Non-human nouns

university	جامعة
library	مكتبة
book	كتاب
office	مكتب
company	شركة
school	مدرسة
city	مدينة

Human nouns

professor	أستاذ
student	طالب
director	مدير
employee	موظف
teacher	مدرس
president	رئيس
friend	صديق

Adjectives

big	كبير
small	صغير
new	جديد
old	قديم
far	بعيد
near	قريب
famous	مشهور

Assorted

in	في
on	على
with	مع
from	من
where	أين
when	متى
who	من
why	لماذا
?	هل - أ

LESSONS

1 - 12

CASES & CONSTRUCTIONS

1

GENDER, DEFINITENESS, CASE ENDINGS, INDEPENDENT PRONOUNS, & PRONOUN SUFFIXES

Gender:

In Arabic there are only two genders: masculine and feminine. Generally speaking (there are some rare exceptions) words ending in a *tā'* *marbūtah* (ة) are feminine and words lacking this are masculine.

طالب

male student

طالبة

female student

Definiteness:

In Arabic the definite article (the) is “ال” and appears at the beginning of the word, connecting as appropriate.

طالب

a male student

الطالب

the male student

Case Endings:

In Arabic there are three possible case endings, corresponding to the three cases, nominative (ُ), accusative (َ), and genitive (ِ). If the word is indefinite, the *tanwīn* form is used, in which case the symbol is doubled (ٌ ً ٍ) and is pronounced with an additional “n” sound. Thus, the six possible forms of the word “male student” in Arabic are:

	indefinite	definite
nominative	طالِبٌ	الطالِبُ
accusative	طالِباً	الطالِبَ
genitive	طالِبٍ	الطالِبِ

Note that in the accusative indefinite, an extra *alif* (ا) is added at the end of the word, with the exception of words ending in *hamzah* (ء) or *tā' marbūlah* (ة).

Independent Pronouns & Pronoun Suffixes:

The following are the independent pronouns and their suffixes:

	suffix	independent	meaning
1 s.	ي +	أنا	I
2 m. s.	كَ +	أنتَ	you
2 f. s.	كِ +	أنتِ	you
3 m. s.	ه +	هو	he
3 f. s.	ها +	هي	she
2 d.	كما +	أنتما	you
3 d.	هما +	هما	they
1 p.	نا +	نحن	we
2 m. p.	كم +	أنتم	you
2 f. p.	كنَّ +	أنتنَّ	you
3 m. p.	هم +	هم	they
3 f. p.	هنَّ +	هنَّ	they

2

ADJECTIVES & NOUN-ADJECTIVE PHRASES

In Arabic the noun comes first, then the adjective(s) modifying it. Adjectives must match the nouns that they modify in case, gender, number, and definiteness.

Thus:

nominative

accusative

genitive

طالِبٌ جَدِيدٌ

a new (m.) student

طالِباً جَدِيداً

طالِبٍ جَدِيدٍ

طالِبَةٌ جَدِيدَةٌ

a new (f.) student

طالِبَةً جَدِيدَةً

طالِبَةٍ جَدِيدَةٍ

الطالِبُ الجَدِيدُ

the new (m.) student

الطالِبَ الجَدِيدَ

الطالِبِ الجَدِيدِ

الطالِبَةُ الجَدِيدَةُ

the new (f.) student

الطالِبَةَ الجَدِيدَةَ

الطالِبَةِ الجَدِيدَةِ

Note that any noun with a possessive pronoun suffix is automatically definite and therefore will not have the definite article. Although the definiteness of this noun is assumed, the adjective modifying it must still match in definiteness.

Thus:

my (m.) student	طالبي
my new (m.) student	طالبي الجديد
my (f.) student	طالبتي
my new (f.) student	طالبتي الجديدة

Note also that, with the exception of the suffix for 1 s., the case endings on nouns with possessive pronoun suffixes appear on the last letter of the original word (excluding the suffix) and not on the suffix itself. Thus:

nominative	accusative	genitive
طالِبُهُ	طالِبَهُ	طالِبِهِ
his (m.) student		

The suffixes are fixed, with the exception of 3 m.s., 3 m.p., and 3 f.p., all three of which take a *kasrah* for ease of pronunciation when suffixed onto a genitive noun.

EQUATIONAL SENTENCES, NOMINATIVE CASE, & PREDICATE ADJECTIVES

Equational Sentences:

An Arabic equational sentence has two parts: the subject and the predicate. Equational sentences equate the two parts (as in $X = Y$) and always mean “subject is predicate.” The helping verb “to be” is unnecessary and is therefore implied between the two parts. Henceforth in this section on constructions, English examples will show subjects underlined and predicates double underlined.

Nominative Case:

Subjects of equational sentences are nominative case. Predicates of equational sentences are nominative case.

The (m.) student is our friend. الطالبُ صديقُنَا

Predicate Adjectives:

When an adjective itself serves as the predicate of an equational sentence, it is a predicate adjective. Predicate adjectives are always indefinite.

The (m.) student is new. الطالبُ جديدٌ

Note that, unlike adjectives modifying nouns, predicate adjectives do not necessarily have to match the nouns they modify in case or definiteness, but must still match in gender.

The (f.) student is new. الطالبةُ جديدةٌ

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS & PRONOUNS OF SEPARATION

In Arabic, the demonstrative pronouns are:

this (m.)	هذا	that (m.)	ذلك
this (f.)	هذه	that (f.)	تلك
these (human)	هؤلاء	those (human)	أولئك

When combined with a definite noun, they form a demonstrative phrase, which acts as a single unit. Demonstrative phrases are not complete sentences.

This (m.) student	هذا الطالبُ
This (f.) student	هذه الطالبةُ

When combined with an indefinite noun, the combination does not act as a single unit. Each word is independent, and the result is an equational sentence.

<u>This</u> is <u>a (m.) student</u> .	هذا طالبٌ
--	-----------

In order to avoid confusion in equational sentences where the subject is a demonstrative pronoun and the predicate is a definite noun, a pronoun of separation is used. The pronoun must correspond to the subject.

This (m.) student	هذا الطالبُ
<u>This</u> is <u>a (m.) student</u> .	هذا طالبٌ
<u>This</u> is <u>the (m.) student</u> .	هذا هو الطالبُ

INTERROGATIVES & RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Interrogatives:

Simple equational interrogatives can be made with **مَا** (what) or **مَنْ** (who).

What is this?*

ما هذا

Who is she?*

من هي

Also, any sentence can be made interrogative by beginning the sentence with **هل** or **أ**.

You are a (m.) student.

أنت طالب

Layla is a (f.) student.

ليلى طالبة

Are you a (m.) student?

هل أنت طالب

Is Layla a (f.) student?

أ ليلى طالبة

Note that **هل** and **أ** are interchangeable, with the exception that **هل** is avoided when preceding words beginning with the letter **ل** and **أ** is avoided when preceding words beginning with the letter **أ**.

*Inverted syntax will be discussed in the next lesson.

Relative Pronouns:

Relative pronouns are used to form relative clauses. In Arabic, the relative pronouns are:

(m.s.)	الَّذِي	(m.p.)	الَّذِينَ
(f.s.)	الَّتِي	(f.p.)	الَّائِي

Depending on whether they refer to a human, a non-human in a restrictive clause, or a no-human in a non-restrictive clause these correspond to the English 'who...', 'that...', or 'which...'. By definition, relative clauses are not complete sentences.

The (m.) student who...	الطَّالِبُ الَّذِي...
The (f.) student who...	الطَّالِبَةُ الَّتِي...
The book that/which...	الْكِتَابُ الَّذِي...
The university that/which...	الْجَامِعَةُ الَّتِي...

PREPOSITIONS, PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES, GENITIVE CASE, & INVERTED SYNTAX

The following are some common Arabic prepositions:

in/at	في
on	على
with	مع
from	من

Prepositional phrases are composed of a preposition and the object of that preposition. Objects of prepositions are in the genitive case.

a university	جامعة
in a university	في جامعة
in the university	في الجامعة

Prepositional phrases are not complete sentences. They can modify nouns or pronouns, or they can themselves serve as predicates.

I am <u>a student</u> .	أنا طالب
I am <u>a student in a university</u> .	أنا طالب في جامعة
I am <u>a student in the university</u> .	أنا طالب في الجامعة
I am <u>in the university</u> .	أنا في الجامعة

Inverted Syntax:

If a prepositional phrase is serving as the predicate of an equational sentence and the subject is indefinite, the syntax is inverted.

A student is in the university. في الجامعة طالبٌ

Note that the word طالبٌ appears last in the Arabic equational sentence (In the university is a student), even though it is the subject. Prepositional phrases are never subjects of sentences.

There are other instances in which syntax is inverted, but you need not concern yourself with them at this stage. As you become more familiar with Arabic sentence structure, you will naturally begin to recognize when something is unusual, such as syntax inversion.

IDĀFAH CONSTRUCTIONS

An *idāfah* construction shows a possessive relationship between two nouns. The first term of an *idāfah* never takes the definite article **ال** and never takes *tanwīn*, but it may be any of the three cases (just like any normal noun), depending on the grammatical function of the *idāfah* as a whole. The second term of an *idāfah* must take either the definite article **ال** or *tanwīn*, (just like any normal noun), but is always in the genitive case. Thus, the first term indicates the case of the *idāfah* as a whole and the last (second) term indicates the definiteness of the *idāfah* as a whole. *Idāfahs* are not complete sentences.

(nominative) the professor of the university أستاذ الجامعة
(nominative) a professor of a university أستاذ جامعة

Note that adjectives cannot come between the nouns in an *idāfah*. In order for adjectives to come as close as possible to the nouns they modify, they must come immediately after the *idāfah* construction, in reverse order of the nouns they modify.

أستاذ الجامعة الكبيرة الجديدُ
the new professor of the large university

Complex *Idāfahs*:

Complex *idāfahs* are merely strings of two or more simple (two-noun) *idāfahs*. As such, the first term must still follow rules for first terms of *idāfahs* and the last term must follow the rules for the rule for last terms of *idāfahs*. However, any term that is between the first and the last in the string is actually both the second term of the previous *idāfah* in the chain and the first term of the next *idāfah* in the chain. As such, it may take neither the definite article **ال** nor *tanwīn* (because it is the first term of the

next *idāfah*), and it must be in the genitive case (because it is the second term of the previous *idāfah*).

Thus:

مكتبُ مديرِ مكتبةِ الجامعةِ

the office of the director of the library of the university

KĀNA (& HER SISTERS) CONSTRUCTIONS, & ACCUSATIVE CASE

In Arabic, equational sentences are put in the past by using the perfect tense conjugation of *kāna*. Equational sentences are negated by using the perfect conjugation of *laysa*. At this point, there is no need to learn the full conjugations of these two verbs, but you should be familiar with at least the 1 s., the 2 m.s. and 2 f.s. conjugations for now. These two verbs (as well as some others) are referred to as “sisters” because they function in the same way grammatically. *Kāna* (and her sisters) constructions are complete sentences. *Kāna* constructions have three parts. In order, they are: the *kāna*, the subject of *kāna*, and then the predicate of *kāna*. Subjects of *kāna* constructions are nominative case. Predicates of *kāna* constructions are accusative case. Recall that predicate adjectives are always indefinite regardless of case.

Thus:

<u>The (m.) student</u> is <u>new</u> .	الطالبُ جَدِيدٌ
<u>The (m.) student</u> is not <u>new</u> .	لَيْسَ الطالبُ جَدِيداً
<u>The (m.) student</u> was <u>new</u> .	كَانَ الطالبُ جَدِيداً
<u>The (f.) student</u> is <u>new</u> .	الطالبةُ جَدِيدَةٌ
<u>The (f.) student</u> is not <u>new</u> .	لَيْسَتْ الطالبةُ جَدِيدَةً
<u>The (f.) student</u> was <u>new</u> .	كَانَتْ الطالبةُ جَدِيدَةً

Note that if the subject of a *kāna* construction is a pronoun, it may be omitted. It remains the implied subject. The subject is clear since the verb is conjugated specifically for each pronoun.

Thus:

He is not a (m.) student.

لَيْسَ طَالِباً

He was a (m.) student.

كَانَ طَالِباً

She is not a (f.) student.

لَيْسَتْ طَالِبَةً

She was a (f.) student.

كَانَتْ طَالِبَةً

Some of the other sisters in this family include:

To not be

لَيْسَ

To become (in the morning)

أَصْبَحَ

To become (in the evening)

أَمْسَى

To still be (remain)

ضَلَّ

To still be (remain)

مَا زَالَ

To 'as long as' be

مَا دَامَ

You will learn full verbal conjugations in later lessons. For now, focus on recognizing *kāna* and *laysa* constructions and understanding how they function.

INNA (& HER SISTERS) CONSTRUCTIONS

Inna and her sisters are a group of particles in Arabic that have the same grammatical function. *Inna* (and her sisters) constructions have three parts. They are, in order: the *inna*, the subject of *inna*, and the predicate of *inna*. Subjects of *inna* constructions are accusative case. Predicates of *inna* constructions are nominative case. *Inna* and her sisters are fixed particles. They do not conjugate as verbs do and they do not take case endings as nouns do. Only *inna* constructions are always complete sentences. Most of her sisters' constructions are not complete sentences. *Layta* and *la'alla* are verb-like particles and their constructions can sometimes translate into English as complete sentences (when used in the sense noted in parentheses, below). The following are *inna* and her sisters:

Indeed,	إِنَّ	
... that...	أَنَّ	
... because...	لِأَنَّ	
... but,	لَكِنَّ	
...perhaps, maybe, might...	لَعَلَّ	(to hope)
...if only...	لَيْتَ	(to wish)

Thus:

<u>The (m.) student</u> is <u>new</u> .	الطالبُ جَدِيدٌ
Indeed, <u>the (m.) student</u> is <u>new</u> .	إِنَّ الطالبَ جَدِيدٌ
... but <u>the (m.) student</u> is <u>new</u> .	لَكِنَّ الطالبَ جَدِيدٌ
<u>The (f.) student</u> is <u>new</u> .	الطالبةُ جَدِيدَةٌ
Indeed, <u>the (f.) student</u> is <u>new</u> .	إِنَّ الطالبةَ جَدِيدَةٌ
... but <u>the (f.) student</u> is <u>new</u> .	لَكِنَّ الطالبةَ جَدِيدَةٌ

Recall that *kāna* (and her sisters) are verbs and their subjects need not be explicitly stated because subjects are implied in conjugation. *Inna* (and her sisters) are not verbs. The subjects of *inna* (and her sisters) constructions cannot be implied. If the noun itself is not directly stated, a pronoun must be used. Pronouns are suffixed to *inna* and her sisters.

Thus:

Indeed, <u>he</u> is <u>new</u> .	إِنَّهُ جَدِيدٌ
... but <u>he</u> is <u>new</u> .	لَكِنَّهُ جَدِيدٌ
Indeed, <u>she</u> is <u>new</u> .	إِنَّهَا جَدِيدَةٌ
... but <u>she</u> is <u>new</u> .	لَكِنَّهَا جَدِيدَةٌ

REGULAR PLURALS, *KULL* & *BA‘D*

Regular Plurals: Arabic regular plurals are made by adding the following suffixes:

	Masculine plural	Feminine plural
Nominative	... وَنَ	... اَتْ
Accusative	... يْنَ	... اِتِّ
Genitive	... يْنَ	... اِتِّ

Note that the accusative and genitive forms of these plurals appear the same.

Feminine plurals follow the rules of *tanwīn* and ‘ال’ as normal. However, masculine plurals never take *tanwīn*. For masculine regular plurals, the addition of ‘ال’ indicates definiteness and the absence of ‘ال’ indicates indefiniteness.

هم مسلمون صالحون و هنَّ مسلماتٌ صالحاتٌ

They are upstanding Muslims (male and female).

مديراتُ الجامعة مسلماتٌ

The (f.) directors of the university are (f.) Muslims.

Also note that if a masculine regular plural is the first term of an *idāfah*, the letter ‘ن’ at the end is dropped. For example:

ليس مديرو الجامعة مشهورين

The (m.) directors of the university are not (m.) famous.

Kull and Ba'd:

In Arabic, 'all' and 'some' are usually found in *idāfah* construct or joined with a pronoun suffix. For example:

كُلُّ مُسْلِمٍ وَ مُسْلِمَةٍ...
Every Muslim (m. and f.)...

بَعْضُ الطَّالِبَاتِ وَ الْمُدَرِّسَاتِ...
Some of the (f.) students and (f.) teachers...

Sometimes 'ال' is added and the nouns are made definite when used in the sense of 'everyone' or 'everything' or 'some [people]' or 'some [things]'. For example:

الْكُلُّ يُحِبُّونَهُ
Everyone loves it/him.

الْبَعْضُ هُنَا وَ الْبَعْضُ هُنَاكَ
Some are here and some are there.

كُلُّهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ وَ لَكِنَّ بَعْضَهُمْ لَا يَدْرُسُونَ
All of them are Muslims but some of them don't study.

BROKEN PLURALS & DIPTOTES

There are many forms of broken plurals and diptotes. As you advance in Arabic you will become more familiar with them. This is just a cursory introduction so that you will not be shocked when you see them.

Broken Plurals: In addition to regular plurals, Arabic also has broken plurals. The easiest way to learn these is to familiarize yourself with some common patterns. Then when you come across a new word that is in one of these patterns, you will recognize that it is a broken plural.

أَفْعُلْ	soul	نَفْسٌ — أَنْفُسٌ
أَفْعَالٌ	door	بَابٌ — أَبْوَابٌ
	grandfather	جَدٌّ — أَجْدَادٌ
	grape	عِنَبٌ — أَعْنَابٌ
فَعْلَةٌ	magician	سَاحِرٌ — سَحَرَةٌ
فَعْلَى	dead	مَيِّتٌ — مَوْتَى
فِعَالٌ	bone	عَظْمٌ — عِضَامٌ
	shadow/shade	ظِلٌّ — ظِلَالٌ
	generous	كَرِيمٌ — كِرَامٌ
فُعُولٌ	army/soldier/troop	جُنْدٌ — جُنُودٌ
	prison	سِجْنٌ — سُجُونٌ
فُعْلَاءُ	scholar	عَالِمٌ — عُلَمَاءُ

Diptotes: Most Arabic words are triptotes (exhibit all three case markers) but diptotes are an exception. Diptotes only show the nominative and accusative marker. When they are genitive, they *appear* accusative and don't show their genitive-ness. Diptotes also *never take tanwīn* (when they behave like diptotes). Sometimes, there are exceptions to the exception: diptotes behave like triptotes when they have an explicit definite article, 'ال', and when they are the first term of an *idāfah*. Remember that every term of a complex *idāfah* (except the last) is a first term.

Some examples of diptote forms are:

Feminine names

(فَاطِمَةٌ ، عَائِشَةُ ، خَدِيجَةُ)

Masculine names that end in *tā' marbūṭah*

(حَمْرَةٌ ، أَسَامَةُ)

Words in the patterns

(أَكْبَرُ) أَفْعُلُ
(عُثْمَانُ) فَعْلَانُ
(فَعَائِلُ ، أَفَاعِلُ) and others

Words that have entered Arabic from other languages, such as

(إِبْرَاهِيمُ ، دِمَشْقُ ، فَلَسْطِينُ)

Some broken plural patterns are also diptotes, such as

(مَسَاجِدُ) مَفَاعِلُ
(فَوَاكِهُ) فَوَاعِلُ

NON-HUMAN PLURALS

In Arabic, non-human plurals are treated grammatically as feminine and singular. This applies to the adjectives modifying them, as well as to applicable pronouns, including demonstrative and relative pronouns. For example, books are non-human. In Arabic, while the singular noun (book) is masculine, its plural (books) is treated as feminine and singular. Note that the treatment of gender and number has no bearing on definiteness or indefiniteness.

A book	كِتَابٌ
Books	كُتُبٌ
The new book	الْكِتَابُ الْجَدِيدُ
The new books	الْكُتُبُ الْجَدِيدَةُ
This book	هَذَا الْكِتَابُ
These books	هَذِهِ الْكُتُبُ
The book that...	الْكِتَابُ الَّذِي...
The books that...	الْكُتُبُ الَّتِي...

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF EQUATIONAL & “SISTERS” CONSTRUCTIONS

These constructions must be mastered before continuing to the next part of the course.

There are only four types of complete sentence structures in Arabic. So far, we have learned three of them. They are as follows:

Equational Sentences:

They have two parts:

- 1) the nominative subject of the equational sentence
- 2) the nominative predicate of the equational sentence

Kāna and her sisters constructions:

They have three parts:

- 1) the *kāna*, conjugated for subject
- 2) the nominative subject of *kāna* (sometimes implied)
- 3) the accusative predicate of *kāna*

Inna and her sisters constructions:

They have three parts:

- 1) the *inna*
- 2) the accusative subject of *inna* (sometimes a pronoun suffix)
- 3) the nominative predicate of *inna*

Soon we will learn the last of the four types, which is

Verbal sentences:

These have three parts:

- 1) the verb, conjugated for subject
- 2) the nominative subject of the verb
- 3) the accusative object of the verb (with the exception of intransitive verbs and passive verbs)

Predicates (of the first three types of constructions) need not be single words. Any of these four types of complete constructions can serve in the place of a predicate, thus forming complete sentences within larger complete sentences. As you will see by the end of this course, every (proper) Arabic sentence that you read, no matter how long or complicated or intricate, will be either one of these four types, or some combination of two or more of these four types. When coming across any sentence you do not understand:

- 1) Identify which of these four structures it is
- 2) Remind yourself how many parts that type of structure has
- 3) Identify each of those parts

Every Arabic sentence, no matter how long or complex, is nothing more than a combination of two or more of these constructions. Learn these four basic structures well, and you will be able to tackle any Arabic sentence.

LESSONS

13 - 17

TENSES & MOODS

13

VERBAL SENTENCES, PERFECT TENSE (PAST), & VERB-SUBJECT AGREEMENT

Most Arabic verbal sentences have three parts: The conjugated verb, the nominative subject of the verb, and the accusative object of the verb. Sometimes the subject is not specified. A specified subject is unnecessary since the verb is conjugated for subject. Note that intransitive verbs do not have objects.

Perfect Tense:

Most Arabic verbs are triliteral (have three root letters). The verb ‘to do’ (فَعَلَ) is generally used as the example for learning conjugations. The perfect tense denotes past action.

فَعَلْتُ ذَلِكَ I did that.

Verb conjugations must be memorized and you must be perfectly comfortable with them before continuing. Note that 3 d. is gender specific.

Perfect verb

1 s.	فَعَلْتُ	أَنَا	I
2 m. s.	فَعَلْتَ	أَنْتَ	you
2 f. s.	فَعَلْتِ	أَنْتِ	you
3 m. s.	فَعَلَ	هُوَ	he
3 f. s.	فَعَلَتْ	هِيَ	she
2 d.	فَعَلْتُمَا	أَنْتُمَا	you
3 d.	فَعَلُوا، فَعَلْنَا	هُمَا	they
1 p.	فَعَلْنَا	نَحْنُ	we
2 m. p.	فَعَلْتُمْ	أَنْتُمْ	you
2 f. p.	فَعَلْتُنَّ	أَنْتُنَّ	you
3 m. p.	فَعَلُوا	هُمْ	they
3 f. p.	فَعَلْنَ	هُنَّ	they

Negation of Past with Perfect Tense:

The past may be negated using the perfect tense and the negation particle **مَا**, though classically, the imperfect jussive is more commonly used.

مَا فَعَلْتُ ذَلِكَ I did not do that.

Verb-Subject Agreement:

Note that verbal sentences often begin with the verb. This is proper Arabic syntax. Also, because verbs are conjugated for subject, the subject does not need to be specified (as in the examples above). If a subject is specified and the verb comes before the subject, the verb is conjugated

for gender but remains singular. If the subject is specified before the verb, then the verb must be conjugated also for number.

دَرَسَ الطَّلَابُ الْكِتَابَ

The students studied the book (verb first, singular).

الطَّلَابُ دَرَسُوا الْكِتَابَ

The students studied the book (specified subject first, verb plural).

IMPERFECT TENSE, INDICATIVE MOOD
(PRESENT AND FUTURE),
& NEGATION OF THE PRESENT

The imperfect indicative denotes either present action or future action. Note that the conjugations for 2.m.s (أَنْتَ) and 3.f.s. (هِيَ) appear the same.

Imperfect indicative verb

1 s.	أَفْعَلُ	أَنَا	I
2 m. s.	تَفْعَلُ	أَنْتَ	you
2 f. s.	تَفْعَلِينَ	أَنْتِ	you
3 m. s.	يَفْعَلُ	هُوَ	he
3 f. s.	تَفْعَلُ	هِيَ	she
2 d.	تَفْعَلَانِ	أَنْتُمَا	you
3 d.	يَفْعَلَانِ	هُمَا	they
1 p.	نَفْعَلُ	نَحْنُ	we
2 m. p.	تَفْعَلُونَ	أَنْتُمْ	you
2 f. p.	تَفْعَلْنَ	أَنْتُنَّ	you
3 m. p.	يَفْعَلُونَ	هُمْ	they
3 f. p.	يَفْعَلْنَ	هُنَّ	they

Though technically not necessary, the particle *sawfa* (سَوْفَ) is often used to make clear that future tense is intended. *Sawfa* is sometimes abbreviated and prefixed as a *sa-*.

أَفْعَلُ
سَوْفَ أَفْعَلُ
سَأَفْعَلُ

I do / I am doing, or I will do.

I will do.

I will do.

Negation of the present:

The present is negated with the particles لا or ما.

لَا أَفْعَلُ
مَا أَفْعَلُ

I do not do / I am not doing.

I do not do / I am not doing.

IMPERFECT TENSE, JUSSIVE MOOD (NEGATION OF PAST)

In the jussive mood, the final *ḍammah* is replaced with a *sukūn*, and *nūns* get dropped except for the feminine plurals.

Imperfect jussive verb

1 s.	أَفْعَلْ	لَمْ	أَنَا	I
2 m. s.	تَفْعَلْ	لَمْ	أَنْتَ	you
2 f. s.	تَفْعَلِي	لَمْ	أَنْتِ	you
3 m. s.	يَفْعَلْ	لَمْ	هُوَ	he
3 f. s.	تَفْعَلْ	لَمْ	هِيَ	she
2 d.	تَفْعَلَا	لَمْ	أَنْتُمَا	you
3 d.	يَفْعَلَا	لَمْ	هُمَا	they
1 p.	نَفْعَلْ	لَمْ	نَحْنُ	we
2 m. p.	تَفْعَلُوا	لَمْ	أَنْتُمْ	you
2 f. p.	تَفْعَلْنَ	لَمْ	أَنْتُنَّ	you
3 m. p.	يَفْعَلُوا	لَمْ	هُمْ	they
3 f. p.	يَفْعَلْنَ	لَمْ	هُنَّ	they

The imperfect jussive is commonly used with the negation particle *لَمْ* to negate the past.

لَمْ أَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ

I did not do that.

IMPERFECT TENSE, SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD
(DESIRE, NEGATION OF FUTURE)

In the subjunctive mood, the final *ḍammah* is replaced with a *fathah*, and *nūns* get dropped except for the feminine plurals.

Imperfect subjunctive verb

1 s.	أَفْعَلْ	لَنْ	أَنَا	I
2 m. s.	تَفْعَلْ	لَنْ	أَنْتَ	you
2 f. s.	تَفْعَلِي	لَنْ	أَنْتِ	you
3 m. s.	يَفْعَلْ	لَنْ	هُوَ	he
3 f. s.	تَفْعَلْ	لَنْ	هِيَ	she
2 d.	تَفْعَلَا	لَنْ	أَنْتُمَا	you
3 d.	يَفْعَلَا	لَنْ	هُمَا	they
1 p.	نَفْعَلْ	لَنْ	نَحْنُ	we
2 m. p.	تَفْعَلُوا	لَنْ	أَنْتُمْ	you
2 f. p.	تَفْعَلْنَ	لَنْ	أَنْتُنَّ	you
3 m. p.	يَفْعَلُوا	لَنْ	هُمْ	they
3 f. p.	يَفْعَلْنَ	لَنْ	هُنَّ	they

The imperfect subjunctive is used to express wishes or desires. It is also used with the negation particle **لَنْ** to negate the future.

أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَفْعَلَ ذَلِكَ

I want to do that

لَنْ أَفْعَلَ ذَلِكَ

I will not do that.

Other particles that make the verbs after them subjunctive include: **كَيْ** / **لِكَيْ** / **لِ** **حَتَّى**. These all mean “in order to...” or “so that...”

ذهبتُ إلى الجامعة لأَدْرُسَ

I went to the university to study.

... لِكَيْ أَدْرُسَ

I went to the university to study.

... كَيْ أَدْرُسَ

I went to the university to study.

... حَتَّى أَدْرُسَ

I went to the university to study.

PAST PROGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS & THEIR NEGATION

In Arabic, the past progressive is composed of the combination of a perfect *kāna* + imperfect indicative verb, both conjugated for the subject.

درستُ اللغةَ العربيَّةَ

I studied the Arabic language.

كنتُ أدرسُ اللغةَ العربيَّةَ

I used to study the Arabic language.

Negating the *kāna* portion negates the past progressive.

ما كنتُ أدرسُ اللغةَ العربيَّةَ

I did not use to study the Arabic language.

لم أكنُ أدرسُ اللغةَ العربيَّةَ

I did not use to study the Arabic language.

One could negate the verb portion if such emphasis is intended:

كنتُ لا أدرسُ اللغةَ العربيَّةَ

I used to not study the Arabic language.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF VERB TENSES & MOODS

Every Arabic verbal sentence makes use of one or more of the tenses and moods described in this section. Verb tenses and moods must be mastered before continuing to the next phase of this course.

LESSONS

18 - 30

ROOTS AND FORMS

FORM I,
INTRODUCTION TO TRILITERAL ROOTS,
& THE ARABIC DICTIONARY

Like other Semitic languages, Arabic is based on triliteral roots (and rarely, quadriliteral roots). For example, the following words are related and share the same root letters: ك - ت - ب

كتابة

writing (the act of writing something)

كاتب

author (someone who writes)

مكتب

office (a place where things are written)

كتاب

book (written pages bound together)

مكتبة

library (a place where written materials are stored)

By contrast, in English, the word ‘author’ comes from Latin *augere*, ‘book’ comes from Old English/Germanic *bōc*, ‘library’ comes from Latin *liber*, etc.

In Arabic, the words are both conceptually related (in meaning) and morphologically related (in form). This is why it is important to familiarize yourself with Arabic roots, and to learn how to use a root-based dictionary rather than one in which the entries are listed alphabetically by individual words. It is also important not to fall into the lazy trap of learning new verb forms by remembering only the perfect tense. Learn the perfect and imperfect indicative together.

There are fourteen verb forms in Arabic. The first ten are common and you must know them well. I encourage all students to learn the following for each new Arabic verb form:

3ms perfect, 3ms imperfect indicative, verbal noun, active participle, passive participle, and imperative. These are usually learned using the root for the generic verb “to do,” ف - ع - ل .

For form I:

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
افْعَلْ!	مَفْعُولٌ	فَاعِلٌ	فِعْلٌ	يَفْعُلْ	فَعَلَ

For form I of the verb root ك - ت - ب, these would be:

اِكْتُبْ!	مَكْتُوبٌ	كَاتِبٌ	كِتَابَةٌ	يَكْتُبُ	كَتَبَ
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Some other examples of form I Arabic verbs are:

To study

دَرَسَ - يَدْرُسُ

To know

عَلِمَ - يَعْلَمُ

To gather (things or people) together

جَمَعَ - يَجْمَعُ

To protect, memorize

حَفِظَ - يَحْفَظُ

Note that the vowel on the middle radical varies from one verb to another. This is why it is important to memorize both the perfect and imperfect indicative together when learning new verbs. For the time being, we will use only verbs that have three consonants as the root letters. Note also that, although you will have to learn the beginnings of each imperative form, the endings all follow the same patterns as jussive endings.

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FORM II

Form II Arabic verbs have a doubled middle radical (marked by a *shaddah*).

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
فَعِّلْ!	مُفَعِّلٌ	مُفَعِّلٌ	تَفْعِيلٌ	يُفَعِّلُ	فَعَّلَ

The meanings of form II verbs are most commonly:

Causative (to make the object be or do form I).

عَلَّمَ

to know

عَلَّمَ

to teach

حَمَلَ

to carry

حَمَلَ

to make s.o./s.t. carry, to burden with

Transitivising (form II is the transitive version of an intransitive form I verb).

فَرِحَ

to be happy

فَرَّحَ

to make s.o. happy

ضَعَفَ

to be weak

ضَعَّفَ

to make s.o./s.t. weak

Intensive/extensive (to do form I more intensely or more frequently)

كَسَرَ

to break

كَسَّرَ

to smash into many pieces

قَتَلَ

to kill

قَتَّلَ

to massacre, slaughter

Estimative (to consider the object as having the characteristics of form I)

كَذَبَ

to lie

كَذَّبَ

to consider s.o. a liar, to disbelieve s.o.

صَدَقَ

to tell truth

صَدَّقَ

to consider s.o. honest, to believe s.o.

Denominative (to make, do, or be occupied with the noun of form I)

خَيْمَةً

tent

خَيَّمَ

to pitch a tent

مَرِيضٌ

a sick person

مَرَّضَ

to nurse s.o. who is ill

FORM III

Form III Arabic verbs have an *alif* (ا) between the first and middle radical.

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
فَاعِلْ!	مُفَاعَلٌ	مُفَاعِلٌ	مُفَاعَلَةٌ	يُفَاعِلُ	فَاعَلَّ

The meanings of form III verbs most commonly involve effort and/or reciprocity.

Effort (to try to accomplish the form I verb). Note the implied reciprocity.

قَتَلَ

to kill

قَاتَلَ

to try to... (= to fight)

سَبَقَ

to come first, precede

سَابَقَ

to try to... (= to race)

صَرَعَ

to throw to the ground

صَارَعَ

to try to... (= to wrestle)

For some form I verbs involving prepositions, their form III verb takes a direct object instead:

كَتَبَ إِلَى...

to write to...

كَاتَبَ

to write to...

جَلَسَ عِنْدَ...

to sit next to...

جَالَسَ...

to sit next to...

For some form I verbs involving qualities or states, their form III verb means applying that quality or putting into that state:

خَسَنَ

to be rough, coarse

خَاسَنَ

to treat roughly, harshly

حَسَنَ

to be good, kind

حَاسَنَ

to treat well, kindly

Form III is also sometimes denominative (to make, do, or be occupied with the noun of form I)

ضَعَفَ

Equal, alike

ضَاعَفَ

to double

سَفَرَ

a journey

سَافَرَ

to go on a journey (= to travel)

FORM IV

Form IV Arabic verbs have an *alif* (ا) or *yā'* (ي) before the first consonant (which always has a *sukūn*).

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
أَفْعِلْ!	مُفْعَلٌ	مُفْعِلٌ	إِفْعَالٌ	يُفْعِلُ	أَفْعَلَ

The meanings of form IV verbs are sometimes similar to form II, and include:

Causative, transitivity, or doubly transitivity:

جَلَسَ

to sit

أَجْلَسَ

to seat someone

أَكَلَ

to eat

أَكَلَ

to feed someone

When both are causative, sometimes there are shades of meaning between II and IV:

عَلِمَ

to know

عَلَّمَ

to teach

أَعْلَمَ

to inform

Other meanings include:

Entering into a state of being:

سَرَعَ

to be fast

أَسْرَعَ

to hasten, speed up

بَطُؤَ

to be slow

أَبْطَأَ

to slow down, decelerate

قَدَّمَ

to be in front of

أَقْدَمَ

to advance

Denominative:

دَبَّرَ

backside

أَدْبَرَ

to turn away, run away

ثَمَرَ

fruit

أَثْمَرَ

to bear fruit

Estimative (similar to some form IIIs):

حَمَدَ

to praise

أَحْمَدَ

to consider s.o. praiseworthy

FORM V

Form V Arabic verbs are related to form II but have an additional *tā'* (ت) in the beginning.

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
تَفَعَّلْ !	مُتَفَعَّلٌ	مُتَفَعِّلٌ	تَفَعَّلُ	يَتَفَعَّلُ	تَفَعَّلَ

The meanings of form V verbs are also related to the meanings of form II and include:

What is transitive in form II becomes reflexive/reciprocal in form V (the object of form II is the subject experiencing form V... often translated as passive):

كَبَّرَ

to be big

كَبَّرَ

to make big

تَكَبَّرَ

to make oneself big, become big
(to be arrogant)

عَلِمَ

to know

عَلَّمَ

to teach

تَعَلَّمَ

to learn
(to become knowledgeable)
(to absorb the teaching for o.s.)

مَثَلَ

to imitate,
resemble,
copy

مَثَّلَ

to make s.t.
resemble,
to make s.t.
appear similar

نَمَثَلَ

to take the form of s.o./s.t.,
to make o.s. resemble s.o./s.t.

حَدَّثَ

to happen

حَدَّثَ

to report,

تَحَدَّثَ

to discuss (with each other)
to speak about

Denominative, adopting traits or characteristics for oneself:

عَرَبِيٌّ

Arab

تَعَرَّبَ

to become Arabized

فَرَنْسَاً

France

تَفَرَّنَسَ

to become French-y

أَمْرِيكَاً

America

تَأَمَّرَكَ

to become Americanized

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FORM VI

Form VI Arabic verbs are related to form III but have an additional *tā'* (ت) in the beginning.

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
تَفَاعَلْ!	مُتَّفَاعِلٌ	مُتَّفَاعِلٌ	تَفَاعُلٌ	يَتَّفَاعَلُ	تَفَاعَلَ

The meanings of form VI verbs are also related to the meanings of form III and include:

What is transitive in form III becomes reflexive/reciprocal in form VI (the object of form III is the subject experiencing form VI... often translated as passive):

بَارَكَ

to bless (s.o./s.t.)

تَبَارَكَ

to be blessed

عَاوَنَ

to help (s.o.)

تَعَاوَنَ

to help each other (= to cooperate)

نَازَعَ

to contend, dispute (w. s.o.)

تَنَازَعَ

to contest each other,
dispute each other

رَأَسَلَ

to contact, write to (s.o.)

تَرَأَسَلَ

to write to each other back and forth
(= correspond)

جَاوَبَ

to answer, respond to (s.o.)

تَجَاوَبَ

to respond to each other repeatedly
back and forth

Traits or characteristics adopted by God for Himself above all others:

تَبَارَكَ

Blessed above all others

تَعَالَى

Exalted above all others

FORM VII

Form VII Arabic verbs have an additional *nūn* (ن) in the beginning.

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
اِنْفَعِلْ!	مُنْفَعِلٌ	مُنْفَعِلٌ	اِنْفَعَالٌ	يَنْفَعِلُ	اِنْفَعَلَ

The meanings of form VII verbs are usually reflexive to direct objects of form I (and sometimes IV) so it is often translated as passive or intransitive.

Note that the reflexive sense applies only to what was the direct object of another form. The subject of form VII is never what was the indirect object of another form. Note also in form VII there is never any reciprocal sense (such as is common in forms V or VI).

كَسَرَ

to break (s.o./s.t.)

اِنْكَسَرَ

to break (intransitive)

فَجَرَ

to split, cleave (s.t.)

اِنْفَجَرَ

to crack open, burst,
explode (all intransitive)

قَطَعَ

to cut (s.t.)

اِنْقَطَعَ

to be cut

كَشَفَ

to uncover (s.t.)

اِنكشَفَ

to be uncovered, to make manifest, to
make apparent

أَطْفَأَ

to extinguish (s.t.)

انْطَفَأَ

to be extinguished

أَصْلَحَ

to fix (s.t.), make right

انْصَلَحَ

to be fixed, made right

FORM VIII

Form VIII Arabic verbs have an additional *tā'* (ت) in the beginning.

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
إِفْعَلْ!	مُفْتَعَلٌ	مُفْتَعِلٌ	إِفْتَعَلْ	يَفْتَعِلُ	إِفْتَعَلَ

The meanings of form VIII verbs are usually reflexive, reciprocal, or passive/intransitive.

Reflexive:

عَرَضَ

to put (s.o./s.t.) forward

إِعْتَرَضَ

to put oneself in the way
(to oppose)

قَرُبَ

to be near to s.t.

إِفْتَرَبَ

to make oneself closer to s.t.
(to approach)

كَشَفَ

to uncover (s.t.)

إِكْتَشَفَ

to uncover for oneself (to discover)

لَمَسَ

to touch (s.t.)

إِلْتَمَسَ

to try to get a hold of (s.t.) for oneself
(to request)

Reciprocal (conjugated for duals or plurals):

قَاتَلَ

to fight/kill (s.o.)

إِفْتَنَلَا

to fight/kill each other

خَصِمَ
to argue

اِخْتَصَمَ
to argue with each other

لَقِيَ
to meet

التَّقَى
to meet with each other

Passive (w/ roots that have no form VII)

نَصَرَ
to help

اِنْتَصَرَ
to be helped by God
(to be made victorious)

مَلَأَ
to fill (s.t.)

اِمْتَلَأَ
to become full

FORM IX

Form IX Arabic verbs have a doubled third radical at the end (marked by a *shaddah*). Form IX is the rarest of the first ten (most common) verb forms, but not as rare as the remaining (uncommon) forms XI-XIV.

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
افْعِلْ!	مُفْعَلٌ	مُفْعِلٌ	افْعِلْ	يَفْعَلُ	افْعَلَّ

The meanings of form IX verbs are rare and most commonly seen only with the sense of becoming a color or quality.

For example:

أَحْمَرُ

the color red

إِخْمَرَّ

to turn red

أَسْوَدُ

the color black

إِسْوَدَّ

to turn black

أَعْوَجُ

bent, skewed

إِعْوَجَّ

to become bent or skewed

أَعْرَجُ

lame (leg)

إِعْرَجَّ

to become lame,
to lose the strength in one's leg

FORM X

Form X Arabic verbs have an additional *sīn* and *tā'* (ست) in the beginning.

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	P
اِسْتَفْعِلْ!	مُسْتَفْعِلٌ	مُسْتَفْعِلٌ	اِسْتِفْعَالٌ	يَسْتَفْعِلُ	اِسْتَفْعَلَ

The meanings of form X verbs usually have a sense of trying or attempting to do something. Some are also estimative, or denominative.

سَلِمَ

to be safe and sound

اِسْتَسَلَّمَ

to surrender, submit, capitulate, give (oneself) up

خَدَمَ

to serve (a purpose)

اِسْتَخْدَمَ

to use (try to make it serve its purpose)

خَرَجَ

to exit

اِسْتَخْرَجَ

to extract (try to pull s.t. out of...)

عَلِمَ

to know

اِسْتَعْلَمَ

to try to know (enquire, ask about)

Estimative:

حَلَّ

to unbind, untie

وَجَبَ

to be necessary

حَسُنَ

to be good nice

اِسْتَحَلَّ

to regard something as *halāl* (to consider fair game, seize, usurp)

اِسْتَوْجَبَ

to consider something as necessary for oneself (to deserve)

اِسْتَحْسَنَ

to consider s.t. good, appropriate (to approve, condone)

Denominative:

خَالِيفَةً

khalīfah, caliph

وَزِيرًا

vizier, minister

اِسْتَخْلَفَ

to appoint s.o. as caliph

اِسْتَوَزَرَ

to appoint s.o. as minister

PASSIVE VOICE

The passive voice is encountered fairly frequently in Arabic. Fortunately, the difference between a passive and active verb is a relatively consistent minor change in the short vowel pattern. Unfortunately, since modern written Arabic is rarely vocalized, you may come across a verbal sentence that initially appears to make no sense, until you realize that the verb is in passive voice.

يُفْعَلُ	فُعِلَ	I
يُفَعَّلُ	فُعِّلَ	II
يُفَاعَلُ	فُوْعِلَ	III
يُفْعَلُ	أُفْعِلَ	IV
يُتَفَعَّلُ	تُفَعِّلَ	V
يُتَفَاعَلُ	تُفُوْعِلَ	VI
Theoretical only	Theoretical only	VII
يُفْتَعَلُ	أُفْتَعِلَ	VIII
Theoretical only	Theoretical only	IX
يُسْتَفْعَلُ	أُسْتَفْعِلَ	X

The differences between the patterns for active and passive verbs are very similar to the differences you have already encountered in the patterns of active participles and passive participles. Note the generally consistent short vowel shifts in the first (ف) and middle

(ع) radicals for the perfect tense, and the generally consistent short vowel shifts in the subject prefix and middle radical (ع) for the imperfect indicative. Note also the and the long vowel shifts for forms III and VI, in which the long *alif* (ا) becomes a long *wāw* (و).

Thus,

كَتَبَ الْكِتَابَ

He wrote the book
(book is object of the active verb)

كُتِبَ الْكِتَابُ

The book was written
(book is now subject of the passive verb)

As this example shows, without short vowel markers, both sentences appear exactly the same. Without context, it would be impossible to determine the exact meaning of the unvowelled sentence. Among the skills you will develop as you become more literate in Arabic is the ability to understand sentences without short vowel markers and to identify passive verbs contextually.

Recall that Arabic form VII verbs and form IX verbs already have essentially passive meanings, thereby making a passive form redundant.

IRREGULAR, WEAK VERBS

You are already familiar with the fact that three letters of the Arabic alphabet (ا, و, ي) are both consonants and vowels. Verbs whose first, middle, or last radical is one of these letters are irregular. When this is the case for the middle radical, the verb is called ‘hollow.’

We will not go into exhaustive detail regarding all the variations and conjugations. Instead, you should familiarize yourself with general patterns, then apply your new knowledge in context as you learn new verbs.

Some examples of verbs with a vowel as the first radical include:

To arrive وَصَلَ يَصِلُ

To promise وَعَدَ يَعِدُ

You are already familiar with two hollow verbs (كَانَ and لَيْسَ). Some other examples are:

To visit زَارَ يَزُورُ

To sell بَاعَ يَبِيعُ

To rise قَامَ يَقُومُ

To fast صَامَ يَصُومُ

To almost كَادَ يَكَادُ (always followed by another verb)

Some examples of verbs with a vowel as the last radical include:

To call upon دَعَا يَدْعُوْ

To complain شَكَأ يَشْكُوْ

To walk مَشَى يَمْشِيْ

To cry بَكَى يَبْكِيْ

DOUBLED ROOTS & QUADRILITERAL ROOTS

Some trilateral Arabic roots have the same consonant as both the second and third radical. These doubled consonants are designated by a *shaddah*. During conjugation the *shaddah* sometimes breaks apart and the two consonants separate.

To complete	تَمَّ	يَبِيَّتْ
To untie, unbind, make permissible	حَلَّ	يَحِلُّ
To make intense	شَدَّ	يَشِدُّ
To extend	مَدَّ	يَمْدُ
To pass	مَرَّ	يَمُرُّ
To ring (make the sound of a bell)	رَنَّ	يَرِنُّ

There are a few quadrilateral verb roots in Arabic. These have four radicals instead of the usual three. Some are onomatopoeic, some are of Arabic origin, some are non-Arabic words that have entered into the Arabic language, and others are neologisms.

To shake, quake	زَلَزَلَ	يُزَلِّزُ
To translate	تَرَجَّمَ	يُتَرَجِّمُ
To decorate (ornament)	زَخَرَ	يُزَخِّرُ

To mumble	يَهْمَهُمُ	هَمَّهُمَ
To whisper	يُوسِسُ	وَسَّسَ
To philosophize	يُقَلِّسُ	قَلَّسَ
To filter	يُقَلِّتُ	قَلَّتَ

We will not go into exhaustive detail regarding all the variations and conjugations. Instead, you should familiarize yourself with general patterns, then apply your new knowledge in context as you learn new verbs.

SINGLE PAGE SUMMARY OF ARABIC FORMS

You must master forms I-X in order to achieve basic competence in standard Arabic. Forms XI-XIV are rarely encountered, if at all.

Imperative	PP	AP	VN	Imp. Ind.	Perfect
فَعِّلْ!	مَفْعُولٌ	فَاعِلٌ	فَعِلٌ	يَفْعَلُ	فَعَّلَ
فَعِّلْ!	مُفَعِّلٌ	مُفَعِّلٌ	تَفْعِيلٌ	يُفَعِّلُ	فَعَّلَ
فَاعِلْ!	مُفَاعِلٌ	مُفَاعِلٌ	مُفَاعَلَةٌ	يُفَاعِلُ	فَاعَّلَ
أَفْعِلْ!	مُفَعِّلٌ	مُفَعِّلٌ	إِفْعَالٌ	يُفَعِّلُ	أَفْعَّلَ
تَفَعَّلْ!	مُتَفَعِّلٌ	مُتَفَعِّلٌ	تَفَعُّلٌ	يَتَفَعَّلُ	تَفَعَّلَ
تَفَاعَلْ!	مُتَفَاعِلٌ	مُتَفَاعِلٌ	تَفَاعُلٌ	يَتَفَاعَلُ	تَفَاعَّلَ
إِنْفَعِلْ!	مُنْفَعِّلٌ	مُنْفَعِّلٌ	إِنْفِعَالٌ	يُنْفَعِّلُ	إِنْفَعَّلَ
إِفْتَعِلْ!	مُفْتَعِّلٌ	مُفْتَعِّلٌ	إِفْتِعَالٌ	يُفْتَعِّلُ	إِفْتَعَّلَ
إِفْعَلْ!	مُفَعِّلٌ	مُفَعِّلٌ	إِفْعَالٌ	يَفْعَلُ	إِفْعَّلَ
اسْتَفْعِلْ!	مُسْتَفْعِلٌ	مُسْتَفْعِلٌ	اسْتِفْعَالٌ	يَسْتَفْعِلُ	اسْتَفْعَلَ

Learn this page well, and you will be able to identify almost any Arabic word.

BEYOND THE BASICS

Serious students will continue learning more advanced aspects of Arabic grammar in context as we translate the texts of their choice, be they religious, legal, medical, scientific, journalistic, literary, or any other Arabic language text.

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